

# HEALTH OF THE BARNSTAPLE RURAL DISTRICT.

## DR. HARPER'S ANNUAL REPORT.

As Medical Officer of Health to the Barnstaple District Council, Dr. Harper has presented his annual report as follows:—

|                                                                                                                                                                                         |         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Population of the district in 1881.....                                                                                                                                                 | 18,436  |
| Population of the district in 1891.....                                                                                                                                                 | 19,037  |
| Area in Statute acres .....                                                                                                                                                             | 132,598 |
| Total births registered in 1897 .....                                                                                                                                                   | 461     |
| Total deaths registered in 1897 .....                                                                                                                                                   | 272     |
| Total increase .....                                                                                                                                                                    | 189     |
| Birth-rate per 1,000 of population .....                                                                                                                                                | 24.21   |
| Death-rate per 1,000 of population .....                                                                                                                                                | 14.28   |
| or adding differences occurring in deaths outside the district among persons belonging thereto, and deaths occurring within the district among persons not belonging thereto, viz. .... | 14      |
| making a death-rate per 1,000 of .....                                                                                                                                                  | 15.0    |
| Total deaths from zymotic diseases .....                                                                                                                                                | 17      |
| Rate per 1,000 of population .....                                                                                                                                                      | 0.89    |
| Birth-rate of England and Wales per 1,000 of population .....                                                                                                                           | 29.7    |
| Death-rate of England and Wales per 1,000 of population .....                                                                                                                           | 17.4    |
| Death-rate from principal zymotic diseases for England and Wales per 1,000 .....                                                                                                        | 2.15    |

Bear-street, Barnstaple,  
February, 1898.

To the Chairman and Members of the Rural District Council, Barnstaple Union.

GENTLEMEN,—

I have the pleasure of forwarding my report for the year 1897, and congratulate the Authority on the decrease in the number of notifiable diseases, although the number of cases of enteric fever is higher than since the year 1890.

**POPULATION.**—The population, according to the census of 1891, shows a slight increase to that of 1881, the population of 1881 being 18,436, and that of 1891 being 19,037; increase, 601.

**ACREAGE.**—The whole district contains 132,598 acres, and is divided into three districts, and superintended by your three Sanitary Inspectors, viz:—

| Districts. | Sanitary Officer. | Acreage. | Population. |
|------------|-------------------|----------|-------------|
| No. 1.     | Mr. Edger         | 36,402   | 6,849       |
| No. 2.     | Mr. R. Vickery    | 40,103   | 6,755       |
| No. 3.     | Mr. S. Robins     | 56,093   | 5,433       |
| Total      |                   | 132,598  | 19,037      |

**VITAL STATISTICS.**—The vital statistics will be found in the corresponding tables, and are estimated on the census of 1891.

**BIRTH RATE.**—The total number of births registered in the year 1897 was 461, as against 515 for 1896, and 487 for 1895. Of these 239 were males and 222 females, finally giving a birth rate of 24.21 per 1,000 of population, as against 27.65 for 1896:—

| Districts. | Males. | Females. | Total. |
|------------|--------|----------|--------|
| No. 1      | 85     | 67       | 152    |
| No. 2      | 81     | 70       | 151    |
| No. 3      | 73     | 85       | 158    |
| Total .... | 239    | 222      | 461    |

**DEATH RATE.**—The total number of deaths registered in the year 1897 was 272, as against 276 for 1896 and 306 for 1895. Of these 145 were males and 127 females, being an average death rate of 14.28 per 1,000 of population, as against 14.49 for 1896 and as against 16.07 for 1895:—

| Districts. | Males. | Females. | Total. |
|------------|--------|----------|--------|
| No. 1      | 56     | 53       | 109    |
| No. 2      | 48     | 37       | 85     |
| No. 3      | 41     | 37       | 78     |
| Total .... | 145    | 127      | 272    |

The following table will show the deaths at different ages:—

| Districts. | No. 1. | No. 2. | No. 3. | Total.                |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------------|
| 53         | 44     | 41     | 138    | 65 years and upwards. |
| 22         | 20     | 14     | 56     | 25 " and under 65.    |
| 6          | 4      | 4      | 14     | 15 " " " 25.          |
| 6          | 1      | —      | 7      | 5 " " " 15.           |
| 5          | 5      | 2      | 12     | 1 " " " 5.            |
| 17         | 11     | 17     | 45     | under 1 year.         |
| 109        | 85     | 78     | 272    |                       |

Of the 138 deaths at 65 years and upwards

|   |   |           |    |   |
|---|---|-----------|----|---|
| " | 4 | were over | 80 | " |
| " | 4 | "         | 81 | " |
| " | 7 | "         | 82 | " |
| " | 4 | "         | 83 | " |
| " | 7 | "         | 84 | " |
| " | 4 | "         | 85 | " |
| " | 3 | "         | 86 | " |
| " | 2 | "         | 87 | " |
| " | 2 | "         | 88 | " |
| " | 4 | "         | 89 | " |
| " | 2 | "         | 90 | " |
| " | 1 | was       | 91 | " |
| " | 1 | "         | 93 | " |

The deaths in 1897 were made up of the following diseases:—

| Diseases.                              | No. 1. | No. 2. | No. 3. | Total. |
|----------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Scarlet Fever.....                     | 0      | 1      | 0      | 1      |
| Diphtheria .....                       | 2      | 1      | 0      | 3      |
| Typhoid Fever .....                    | 2      | 0      | 0      | 2      |
| Erysipelas .....                       | 1      | 0      | 1      | 2      |
| Measles.....                           | 2      | 1      | 0      | 3      |
| Diarrhoea.....                         | 1      | 1      | 4      | 6      |
| Bronchitis, Pleurisy and Pneumonia.... | 22     | 14     | 26     | 62     |
| Phthisis .....                         | 4      | 7      | 1      | 12     |
| Heart diseases .....                   | 11     | 7      | 4      | 22     |
| Injuries .....                         | 5      | 0      | 3      | 8      |
| Other diseases .....                   | 59     | 53     | 39     | 151    |
| Total .....                            | 109    | 85     | 78     | 272    |

The large number of deaths from the Respiratory organs was increased by Bronchitis and Pneumonia following Influenza.

**PHTHISIS.**—The deaths from Phthisis are 12, as against 19 for 1896 and 12 for 1895.

The deaths from Zymotic diseases are 17 as against 26 for 1896, and 22 for 1895.

| Diseases.           | No. 1. | No. 2. | No. 3. | Total. |
|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Scarlet Fever ..... | 0      | 1      | 0      | 1      |
| Diphtheria.....     | 2      | 1      | 0      | 3      |
| Typhoid Fever ..... | 2      | 0      | 0      | 2      |
| Measles .....       | 2      | 1      | 0      | 3      |
| Diarrhoea .....     | 1      | 1      | 4      | 6      |
| Erysipelas .....    | 1      | 0      | 1      | 2      |
| Total .....         | 8      | 4      | 5      | 17     |

Equal to a death-rate of 0.89 per 1,000 of population, as against 1.36 for 1896, and 1.15 for 1895, and 1.10 for 1894.

**CANCER.**—The registered deaths from Cancer are 15, against 12 for 1896, and 16 for 1895.

2 occurred in the No. 1 District.  
6 occurred in the No. 2 District.  
7 occurred in the No. 3 District.  
5 were Males and 10 Females.

**INFLUENZA.**—Several deaths are attributed to this disease.

8 in the No. 1 District.  
6 in the No. 2 District.  
5 in the No. 3 District.

Total 19.

### INFANT MORTALITY.

| Diseases.                                     | No. 1. | No. 2. | No. 3. | Total. |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Bronchitis and Pneumonia .....                | 5      | 1      | 2      | 8      |
| Convulsions.....                              | 6      | 1      | 3      | 10     |
| Measles .....                                 | 1      | 0      | 0      | 1      |
| Infantile Marasmus..                          | 3      | 0      | 0      | 3      |
| Congenital Heart Disease .....                | 1      | 0      | 0      | 1      |
| Tuberculosis .....                            | 1      | 0      | 1      | 2      |
| Incomplete Development .....                  | 0      | 2      | 0      | 2      |
| Imperforate Anus ..                           | 0      | 1      | 0      | 1      |
| Premature Birth and Debility from Birth ..... | 0      | 5      | 4      | 9      |
| Diarrhoea .....                               | 0      | 1      | 4      | 5      |
| Erysipelas .....                              | 0      | 0      | 1      | 1      |
| Gastritis .....                               | 0      | 0      | 2      | 2      |
| Total .....                                   | 17     | 11     | 17     | 45     |

Giving a death-rate of 97.63 per 1,000 of registered births for 1897, as against 118.44 for 1896, 114.98 for 1895, and 121.6 for 1894.

**NOTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES.**—During the year the following cases have notified:—

| Diseases.           | No. 1. | No. 2. | No. 3. | Total. |
|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Diphtheria .....    | 10     | 2      | 0      | 12     |
| Scarlet Fever ..... | 25     | 6      | 10     | 41     |
| Enteric Fever ..... | 9      | 1      | 2      | 12     |
| Erysipelas .....    | 6      | 2      | 4      | 12     |
| Total .....         | 50     | 11     | 16     | 77     |

As against 225 for 1896, 145 for 1895, and 258 for 1894.

**DIPHTHERIA.**—The number three district has been quite free from this disease and only twelve cases have been notified as against fifty-three last year. Of the two cases in the No. 2 district one occurred in Wrafton and followed scarlet fever, and the other in Mortheo village was a sporadic case and nothing could be found to account for the case. Of the ten cases in the No. 1 district four occurred in one house at Horwood and were supposed to be due to defective drainage, which has since been remedied. Two at Instow, one of which was a young girl sent home from her situation, and the other was a school girl. The one at Tawstock I reported upon on February 17th last, and occurred in a cottage where a case occurred about three years since and in which the water supply was very defective. Two occurred at Fremington, in the hamlet of Bickington, and one, a fatal case, at Swimbridge Newland, and was that of

a young girl, following rapidly on an attack of malignant scarlet fever and occurred on the same premises as a fatal case about a year-and-a-half ago. The water in this case has been examined and found good, the whole system of drainage has been relaid and carried out in a satisfactory manner.

**SCARLET FEVER.**—Forty-one cases have been notified, as against 146 for last year: most of the cases were of a mild type, and mainly occurred in the No. 1 district. One case proved fatal.

**ENTERIC FEVER.**—Thirteen cases have been notified as against eight last year. A special report was made on the Lane-End Instow cases on January the 15th, 1897. The causes of these cases, as was pointed out in the report mentioned, was the use of the water from the shallow polluted wells at Lane-End. The water percolating through the very porous soil was easily contaminated through defective drainage. The drainage has been since then attended to under the direction of Mr. A. Thorne. The case at Swimbridge was an isolated one, as was also the one at Tawstock, which occurred at Sticklepath Terrace, and was supposed to be due to the patient (a girl) drinking foul water on Anchor Wood Bank. The case at Bratton was another isolated one. I visited the premises. Some of the suggestions have been carried out, and a fresh supply of water provided, brought from a source some distance from the house and yard.

**ERYSIPELAS.**—The cases of erysipelas were nearly all cases of Facial Erysipelas.

In all these infectious cases (except the cases of Erysipelas) inspections have been made, disinfectants supplied, some of the houses fumigated, and in some cases the clothing and bedding, &c., disinfected at the disinfecting chamber.

The disinfecting apparatus provided by the Council is in good order, and it is a great pity that such an efficient apparatus is not more frequently employed.

**DIARRHOEA.**—All the cases but one were in infants under one year.

**WATER SUPPLY.**—I have very little to add to my report of last year, as to the necessity of providing a proper supply for Instow, Braunton and Parracombe, and the special reports of April and May on Parracombe and Instow water supply, and of the quality of the water on July 1st, 1897. No supply of any importance has been provided for any district during the past year, but the Instow, Braunton and Parracombe supply are still under the consideration of the Authorities. At Swimbridge the control of the water has been taken over by the District Council. I have made several examinations of samples of water during the year, and the following analyses have been made:—

July 3rd, Instow, No. 1 (Gorton), condemned as unfit for domestic use.

July 3rd, Instow, No. 2 (Raffle), condemned as unfit for domestic use.

July 3rd, Instow, No. 3 (James), condemned as unfit for domestic use.

July 22nd, Instow, No. 4 (Lock's Well), extensively polluted and unfit for domestic use unless filtered through a Pasteur filter.

October 14th, Instow (sent by Mr. Thorne), polluted and unfit for domestic use.

November 9th, Instow (sent by Mr. Thorne), fairly free from organic matter "we think it a good water for drinking purposes."

Water Certificates have been granted to 8 houses during the year.

**SCHOOLS CLOSED.**—The following Schools were closed:

Landkey, on account of Measles.  
Bishopstawton, on account of Measles.  
Braunton School, on account of Measles and Mumps.

Brayford School, on account of Measles.  
Bratton Fleming, on account of Measles.

**NEW HOUSES.**—Plans for 40 houses and cottages and structural alterations of houses, &c., have been submitted to the Authority during the year.

**DAIRIES, COW-SHEDS AND MILK-SHOPS' ACT.**—No action has been taken under the Act and no fresh registrations. Slaughter-houses have been visited; no carcasses have been condemned during the year.

**DRAINAGE AND SEWAGE WORKS.**—No structural works of any importance have been out during the year. The flushing of the Braunton sewers has occupied attention, and a Local Government Board enquiry was held at the Schoolroom, Braunton, in July last, to consider the proposal to borrow money for this purpose. Several inspections and reports have been made during the past year. The rainfall at Barnstaple during the month of May was below the average, but from the 1st of January to the end of May it was 18 inches, compared with an average of 13.64 for 30 years, and a register of 8.79 inches for the corresponding period of 1896. There was also an exceptionally heavy fall of rain during the month of August, for, with the exception of the first week, the rainfall was almost incessant, no less than 5.33 inches, as compared with the average of 3.48 for the preceding 30 years. On the whole the year was a fairly healthy one. I beg to thank the Sanitary Inspectors for the ready manner in which they at all times rendered me their assistance.

I am, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

JOSEPH HARPER,

(Medical Officer of Health).

with J. H. Thompson  
Cousin